

VZCZCXRO9567

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBC RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDE RUEHDF RUEHDIR RUEHIK
RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHAH #1378/01 2941349
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 201349Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1731
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4419
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2231
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2096
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2667
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001378

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN AND INL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: AFGHANS AND TURKMEN HOLD
CROSS-BORDER COORDINATION MEETING

- [1](#)1. (SBU) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public internet.
- [1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: UNODC hosted a cross-border meeting between Afghan and Turkmen officials on October 17 at the border town of Serhetabat. Counter narcotics, migration, customs and other officials from both countries were in attendance, as well as representatives of the Ashgabat diplomatic corps. UNODC is likely to seek the support of donor countries to implement the support programs it envisions as the outcome of a formalized agreement in accordance with the Paris and Berlin pacts. END SUMMARY.
- [1](#)3. (SBU) Emboff attended a cross-border cooperation meeting hosted by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) between Turkmen and Afghan officials at the border town of Serhetabat on October 17th. The meeting was the first such gathering of its kind of officials from the two countries, and was organized as part of UNODC's efforts to promote the enforcement of border controls over illicit drug trafficking.
- [1](#)4. (SBU) In addition to UNODC's chief of mission, Ercan Saka, who organized the meeting, other participants included UNODC officials from Herat, Afghanistan; Turkmen officials from the Ministry of National Security, State Border Guard Service, Customs Service, Migration Service and State Counter Narcotics Service. The Afghan delegation consisted of officials from the Border Guards, Counter Narcotics Service, Immigration and one representative from the MFA in Herat. Several members of the diplomatic corps from Ashgabat, both embassies and international organizations, were also present.
- [1](#)5. (SBU) In their statements, Afghan officials said that in contrast to Afghanistan's border relations with Iran and Pakistan, they have no "critical" issues with Turkmenistan concerning border security. They noted that most armed confrontations with narcotics smugglers have occurred at the Iranian border (Herat Vilayaat) and said that they have difficulties patrolling their borders in some areas, which are inaccessible due to impassible or non-existent roads. The border situation should be viewed, they said, in the context of Afghanistan's being at war for the past 30 years. Nevertheless, they are confident that they will be able to live up to their commitments under both the Paris and Berlin

Pacts.

¶16. (SBU) The Turkmen delegates in turn said that they hope to continue to hold cross-border meetings with their Afghan counterparts, and to continue to enhance bilateral, regional and multinational cooperation with Afghanistan, for whom Turkmenistan is "doing all it can" to provide humanitarian assistance. They gave an overview of their recent counter narcotics developments, including the creation of the State Counter Narcotics Service (SCNS) and training center, new border stations at Imam Nazar (Afghan border) and Farap (Uzbek border) checkpoints, the creation of a Paris Pact coordination unit, and hosting of the Caspian Initiative on counter narcotics last June.

NEXT STEPS

¶17. (SBU) UNODC concluded by noting that Afghanistan and Turkmenistan share an 800 km. border and two border checkpoints, a railroad line, and that both are party to main international conventions on drugs and crime. The agency next plans to draft a cross-border cooperation agreement between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, submit a formal letter to both governments on the agreement, identify a point-of-contact for each side and arrange a high-level meeting in Afghanistan. UNODC will provide administrative support and technical infrastructure. For all of these activities, it will undoubtedly seek the financial and technical support of donor countries.

¶18. (SBU) COMMENT: UNODC has embarked upon an ambitious effort

ASHGABAT 00001378 002 OF 002

to foster border security coordination between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Both countries have an interest in promoting border security for reasons of national security, and it is an initiative that Turkmenistan can support without fearing that it would adversely affect its neutrality, the cornerstone of its foreign policy. UNODC will certainly look to the United States and others for financial and technical support to this end. We noted that during the meeting and breaks, there was little informal exchange between the Turkmen and Afghan officials, who are separated by language, although one of the Afghan officials was an ethnic Turkmen who spoke both languages. END COMMENT.
CURRAN